

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent
Proudly Representing Pennsylvania's 15th District



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**Congressman Dent announces that Lehigh Valley is
one of six designated sites in the U.S. for new,
comprehensive anti-gang initiative**

U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15) announced that Eastern Pennsylvania's "222 corridor," stretching from Easton to Lancaster, has been named by the U.S. Justice Department as one of six sites in the country designated to participate in Project Safe Neighborhood (PSN), a new, comprehensive anti-gang initiative.

Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales made the announcements Friday at a National Gang Summit in Los Angeles. Along with the 222 corridor, program designations will go to Los Angeles, Tampa, Fla., Cleveland, Dallas/Ft. Worth, and Milwaukee. Each program will be supported by \$2.5 million in grant funds. Total funding for the program is \$15 million.

Congressman Dent advocated strongly for the inclusion of the Eastern Pennsylvania region within the program, which devotes extensive resources to defeating some of the most violent and pervasive gangs in the country (see attached letter). The District Attorneys and County Executives of Lehigh, Northampton, and Berks Counties, plus the police chiefs of Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, and Reading, all sent in letters of support. The Congressman lobbied the Attorney General's office on the Valley's behalf.

“Gang violence is a growing and dangerous problem for our cities, where police don’t always have the resources to combat this kind of activity,” Congressman Dent said. “This program will integrate prevention and enforcement to fight gang membership and gang violence at every stage. I appreciate the Attorney General’s recognizing this problem in our area by naming it one of the sites for this program. I especially thank U.S. Attorney Patrick Meehan for his efforts to bring this designation to our area.”

“Every American deserves to live free from the fear of violent gangs,” said Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. “The Department of Justice’s anti-gang initiative will help us prevent gang membership, prosecute gang violence, and prepare offenders to return to society and resist the allure of gang activity.”

The initiative was first announced by the Attorney General on Feb. 15, 2006, during his speech on the key priorities for the Department of Justice. The Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative complements existing Department of Justice programs to combat gangs and reduce gun-related crime throughout the country. Those programs include the Violent Crime Impact Teams, Safe Streets Task Forces and the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative, under which the number of federal firearms prosecutions has increased 73 percent in the past five years. This year, the Department will devote \$30 million in grants to expand PSN to include new and enhanced anti-gang efforts, and \$10 million in grant funds to support PSN’s gun crime reduction programs.

These six locations were selected to receive comprehensive anti-gang resources based on a variety of factors, including the severity of the gang problem, established infrastructure to support the envisioned prevention, and the existence of existing partnerships prepared to focus intensely on the gang problem. United States Attorneys in the six locations selected today will be responsible for coordinating federal, state and local efforts under this initiative.

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